

Teaching Pronunciation & Phonology

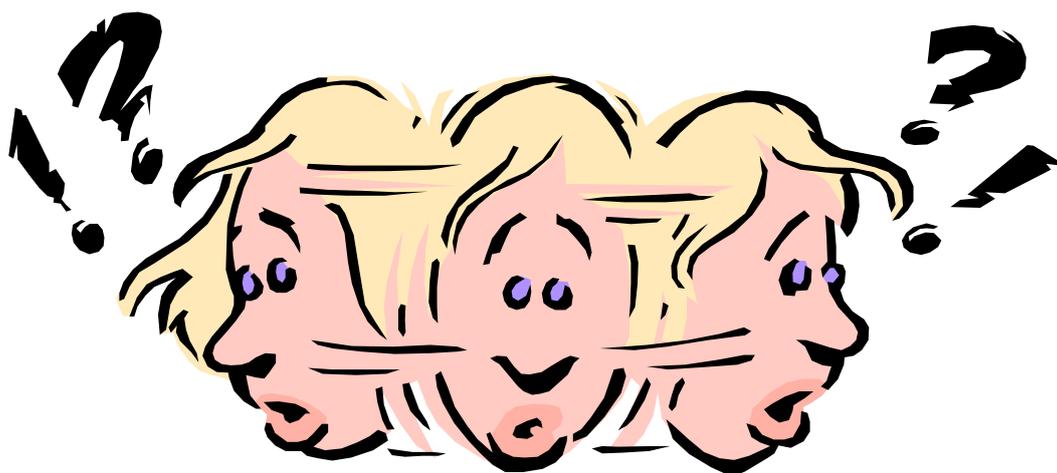
Pronunciation is probably the most neglected aspect of English language teaching. Confidence is often lacking in foreign teachers to teach it methodically, and English teachers sometimes also lack the training and confidence to tackle this area. Applied phonetics is rarely taught at school or even university and it seems an alien, abstract subject to the adult trainee teacher. Then there is the fact that many native English speakers find it difficult to hear certain features, such as the fall or rise of speech, particularly at the end of sentences. The reaction to this is often: "Well, I am an educated English person and if I cannot detect things like that, the foreign student will not be able to either. So what does it matter anyway?"

Most pronunciation, as a result, tends to concentrate on individual sounds, which although the most obvious, is not necessarily the most important part.



An effective teacher considers the teaching of pronunciation an integral part of the course. For one thing, students are as concerned about it as they are with any other aspect of learning English. In a recent study of 500 adult students from Cordoba, Barcelona, Paris, Turin, and Rome, one of the questions asked was: "What do you find the most difficult in English: Grammar, Speaking, Understanding, Pronunciation, Idioms or Writing?" Among these alternatives, pronunciation was in a substantial majority. Skilled pronunciation teaching also gives life to a class because it reflects feelings and personal reactions to different situations. In classroom practice it gives variety to repetition or dialogues which, otherwise, have only a neutral meaning.

As a simple example, the meaning of YES, depends on whether it is YES!, or YES? or YES (with stress). One argument that the unversed teacher has against teaching pronunciation is that it varies so much, depending on the situation and mood of the speaker, that it seems impossible to standardize anything. This argument, however, could also apply to grammar, as structure also depends on what the speaker is trying to say. Nevertheless, it is possible to make some attempt to break up English grammar into general rules and formulae. In the same way it is possible to lay down general guidelines for English pronunciation. The following texts are an attempt to do this. It is, for reasons of practicality, a broad overview. Once the basic concepts have been grasped, the dedicated reader can extend his/her own personal knowledge by further reading and with classroom practice.



Phonology

Definition

Phonology is the study, science, analysis, and classification of the physical properties of sounds. The terms phonetics and phonology are often used interchangeably, although the term phonology is increasingly used to indicate the whole sound system of a particular language, e.g. the phonology of English. In the following texts we will deal with the areas of STRESS, RHYTHM, and INTONATION, as well as concentrating on the International Phonetic Alphabet and its use in helping students to come to an understanding of the pronunciation of English.



Individual sounds, sounds in connected speech, stress within words, and stress within whole utterances, are all difficult for students to perceive in isolation. The main reason for this is that the main interest of someone engaged in the act of communication is in trying to understand the meaning of what is being said. However, some sort of instinctive perception is essential for a full understanding of what is being said, and some sort of analytical perception is useful for correct production. So, it is helpful to give an indication of those features in order to highlight them, even when students are examining other aspects of form or listening for meaning. In the classroom there should be time given to pronunciation, stress and intonation practice so as to make students aware of the importance of accuracy and clarity of communication.

Intonation

Intonation is generally considered to be the variation in volume and pitch in a whole sentence, whereas stress is more concerned with individual words. This distinction becomes blurred in examples such as “YES” on the previous page, when a single word can be a sentence in itself!

Intonation carries the message in a sentence. It is particularly important in questioning, agreeing or disagreeing, or confirming statements. It is also fundamental in the expression of emotions or feelings, e.g. sadness, happiness, disbelief, uncertainty etc.

The normal pattern of intonation in a statement is the rise/fall intonation.

Consider: *I haven't seen him for a week.*

Normally the pitch would gradually rise until the word *him* and then fall right down to where the speaker started, and frequently even lower. It can be indicated thus:

I haven't seen him for a week.

The same rule applies to short utterances like *OK*. If you agree with someone, or agree to do something, you will say *OK* with intonation rising on the *O* and falling right down on the *K*. Try it!

OK

With the falling intonation you are also indicating that you have finished what you want to say.

e.g. ***I'll see you at six, then.*** (Voice falls after *six* – nothing more to be said).

Note also that native speakers normally use the same intonation pattern in straightforward questions. If a teacher said:

How do you spell "rough"?

Intonation rises to *spell* and falls right down on *rough*, indicating that the teacher has finished what he wants to say and it is up to the student to figure it out and reply!

When you finish what you want to say, the intonation falls – in positive and negative statements, questions, greetings, and instructions. If the person being addressed wants to reply, they can; it's up to them. As in the following:

This book is fascinating.

Where did you buy it?

I didn't. (pauses and decides to give more detail)

It was given to me.



Hi! Hello! How you doing? Have a nice day. Good morning! Have fun!

Sit down. And keep quiet. Please shut the door. Enjoy your meal.

Say the above to yourself. You should find that ALL the above examples have falling intonation since you (the speaker) intend to say no more.

The second common intonation pattern is the fall/rise pattern. This indicates surprise and often disagreement, but above all indicates that the speaker wants the person to whom he's speaking to respond or confirm. Look at these four greetings again:

Hi! How you doing? Hello! Good morning!

If these are said with a final rising intonation, either  or 

then they all require an acknowledgement or return greeting. Similarly with:

You don't really mean that, do you? (Pattern – gradual rise to *mean*, then fall, and rise on *do you?*) The speaker may be surprised, but certainly needs confirmation, e.g. *No, I don't* or some other reply, such as *Of course I do!*)

Are you ready yet?

With the fall/rise on *yet*, the questioner is demanding a reply.

A fall/rise pattern can also indicate that the speaker hasn't yet finished what he or she has to say:

e.g. **I was in the market the other day** (Pattern – rise to *market*, fall to *day* and then rise at the end of *day*.) The fall/rise on *day* denotes “don't speak, I haven't finished yet!”)

And do you know who I saw?

(same pattern with fall/rise on *saw*, effectively saying “I don't want you to answer that!”)

You'll never guess!

(fall/rise on *guess*, indicating “don't! I'm going to tell you!”)

It was Stanley!

(fall on *Stanley* and end of the story so far, telling the listeners that they can react if they like.)

Finally, we can have a kind of level intonation which is basically flat, which often indicates that the speaker doesn't really have that much to say, and perhaps doesn't want to communicate.

Common instances are normally short ones like:

Carry on Don't stop I understand etc...

To summarise the three patterns, three different ways of answering the phone might serve as an example:

 **Hello!** indicating "please speak. It's your turn." Polite and welcoming.

 **Hello!** indicating that the speaker has finished what he wants to say and is generally not very happy with the situation! (Perhaps this is the sixth call in ten minutes!)

 **Hello!** Not very welcoming, but grudgingly (?) allows the caller to speak!

Finally, intonation patterns can be powerful predictors of the nature of forthcoming information. An example of this is a BBC newsreader reading the football/soccer results. This can also be used as a classroom activity to help attune students' ears to intonation by predicting the results. The teacher and then students can take turns "reading the results". This is how the newsreader sounds, always pausing between the name of each club and the number of goals they have scored:

ARSENAL 3 BOLTON WANDERERS

(rising intonation to 3 and then falling on *Bolton Wanderers*, denoting a normal statement with expected information i.e. the visitors lost) ... 1

FULHAM 2 EVERTON

(level intonation, **not** rising to 2, and then rising and falling on *Everton* to indicate no change of information, Everton scored the same!) ... 2

CHELSEA 2 LIVERPOOL

(rising intonation to 2, then starting to fall on *Liver* but rising on *pool* to indicate surprise coming! The reigning champions, playing on their home ground and so expected to win, have in fact been beaten! The speaker has prepared us for a score greater than 2!) ... 4

Intonation in English is not a simple matter, but if you can understand the principles of the two main patterns, you are doing well!

Techniques for indicating and teaching intonation

If we have difficulty ourselves knowing how to emphasize different parts of a sentence, along with the unspoken implications that go along with that, imagine the frustrations that the students must have! There are a number of ways we can help them in this regard:

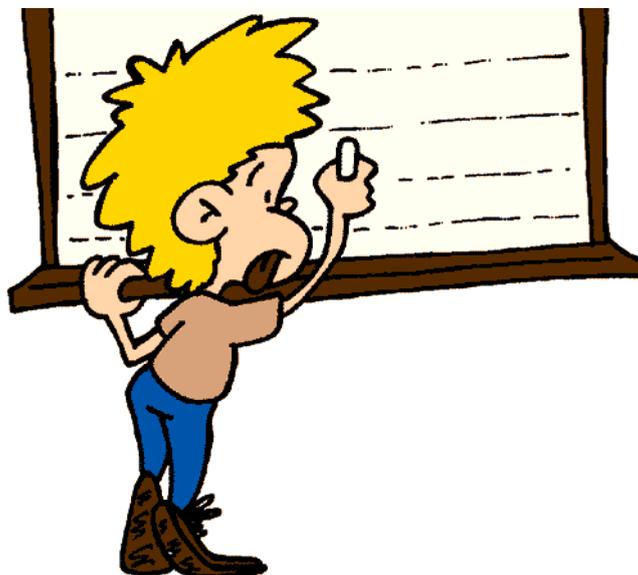
Nonsense words: (just “pure noises”!) can be used to practice conveying attitude.

You could ask your students to utter a nonsense sentence such as “ching dar fee boo” several times, telling them what attitude (e.g. warmth, indifference, pride, hostility, boredom, interest) you want them to communicate on each occasion. Once you have done this with nonsense words, you can then repeat the exercise with real sentences such as “I love you” or “My dog has no hair”. While drama teachers working with native speakers try to get learners to sing with expression, the challenge for language teachers is to get learners to speak with expression.

By gesture: Give a clear sweep of the hand either up or down in order to indicate the general direction. Hands can also be used to indicate whether the sentence starts on a high or low pitch and then indicate the direction of the pitch.

Humming or Singing: By humming or singing out sentences to hear the stress and intonation. The students don't even need to produce words.

The board: By making marks on the board using straight or angled arrows to emphasize the point being made, and the direction of the intonation (see pages 4 and 5 of this unit).



Stress

Let's now turn to stress. Consider the sentence "He didn't mean to kick that dog". There are many different ways of interpreting this sentence. Out of context, we really don't know what the speaker was trying to say or imply, as we don't know where the 'strong' part of sentence lies. The strong part is the stressed word, or word that bears the principal emphasis in the sentence. In the sentences that follow it is also the place in the sentence where the intonation begins to fall.

The stressed words, different each time, are in bold below:

1. **He** didn't mean to kick that dog.
(Somebody else meant to do it)
2. He **didn't** mean to kick that dog.
(Here the speaker is contradicting somebody who thinks he did mean to do it)
3. He didn't **mean** to kick that dog.
(He kicked the dog accidentally)
4. He didn't mean to **kick** that dog.
(This implies that he meant to do something different)
5. He didn't mean to kick **that** dog.
(He meant to kick a different dog)
6. He didn't mean to kick that **dog**.
(He meant to kick something else nearby)

All multi-syllable words in English have one or more parts that are stressed. But which part should it be? There are some basic rules of word stress in English.

Here are two very simple rules about word stress to start:

1. One word has only one stress, and can't have two stresses. There can be a "secondary" stress in some words, but a secondary stress is much smaller than the main (primary) stress, and is only used in longer words.
2. We can only stress syllables, not individual vowels or consonants.

The following page contains some more, rather complicated, rules that can help you understand where to put the stress. But don't rely on them too much, because there are many exceptions! It is always better to try to explain to students that they should try to "feel" the music of the language and to add the stress naturally.

1. Stress on first syllable:

<i>rule</i>	<i>example</i>
Most 2-syllable nouns	China, table, export
Most 2-syllable adjectives	slender, clever, happy

2. Stress on last syllable:

<i>rule</i>	<i>example</i>
Most 2-syllable verbs	create, decide, begin

3. Stress on penultimate syllable:

<i>rule</i>	<i>example</i>
Words ending in -ic	Jurassic, geographic, pathetic
Words ending in -sion and -tion	television, revelation, competition

Note about table 3: For many words, the stress can change according to where the native speaker of English is from. E.g. some native speakers say “television” and others say “**television**”. Another example is: “**controversy**” and “**controversy**”.

4. Stress on ante-penultimate syllable (ante-penultimate = third from end):

<i>rule</i>	<i>example</i>
Words ending in -cy, -ty, -phy and -gy	democracy, dependability, photography, geology
Words ending in -ive	relative, comparative, indicative
Words ending in -al	critical, geological

5 Compound words (words with two parts)

<i>rule</i>	<i>example</i>
For compound nouns, the stress is on the first part	blackbird, greenhouse, post office
For compound adjectives, the stress is on the second part	bad- tempered , old- fashioned
For compound verbs, the stress is on the second part	under stand , over flow

Stress is in reality a much easier area to get across to students, as it doesn't change in most cases. Once a student has learned the correct part of a word to stress, he or she doesn't need to worry about it.

Lack of stress

In normal speech there are more syllables without stress, or unstressed, than with stress! To hear and reproduce unstressed syllables are often the most difficult activities in English for a learner. Look at – and say aloud – this sentence:

He's gone to the supermarket with his friend.

How many stressed syllables are there – excluding any secondary stress?

*He's **gone** to the **supermarket** with his **friend***

The stressed syllables are in bold above (we assume we all know who we are talking about). There would frequently be secondary stress on the third syllable of supermarket. Counting that one, there are four stressed syllables and seven unstressed! A rough rule to explain this is that only the vital syllables in the words conveying the essential information are stressed. The remainder, because they are needed by the grammar, are not stressed. So, in answer to the question *Where's Joe?* - and both syllables are stressed, the essential information is *gone, sup..., friend*.

Auxiliary verbs in all their forms – *be, have, do* – are rarely stressed, except for special emphasis, e.g. *He **didn't** lose it.* (Don't say he did!)

Articles are normally unstressed – *a, an, the* – and are pronounced like a very short *er* with no hint of the *r* sound – see the phonemic script later – vowel 36!

Similarly pronouns and prepositions are normally unstressed, e.g. (we know who we are talking about) *I told him he looked stupid with a spoon on the top of his hat!* Six stressed syllables and nine unstressed! That's par for the course in English!

Techniques for indicating and teaching stress

Contrastive stress: A student can more readily perceive a sound that is voiced by placing it alongside a sound that is non-voiced. A rising questioning tone is easier to recognize when it is heard immediately before or after a falling tone. Stress on a syllable can be shown by saying it correctly

and then repeating the word with the stress on a different syllable. An important point to remember though, if using this technique, is that if you stress sounds unnaturally, for whatever reason, it should then be repeated normally so that the final thing in the students' mind is a correct example.

By gesture: Clapping, clicking fingers, tapping on desk, etc.

Choral work: by chanting or singing typical rhythms of English, for example "tit tum titty tum titty tum" for "I went to the moon in a bus" or "di dah di dah di dah di" for "Just put it on the table".

The board: **Underlining** e.g. He wanted to go.

 □ ■ □ ■
Boxes: e.g. He wanted to go.

Stress marks: e.g. He 'wanted to 'go.

Sound joining

There are four major ways that sounds join together in English.

Linking:	Marble Arch <i>becomes</i> marblarch
Sound dropping (t,d):	Bond Street <i>becomes</i> bon street
Sound changing:	Green Park <i>becomes</i> Greem Park
Extra lettering:	Anna and the king <i>becomes</i> Annner and the king. Dancing with tears in my eyes <i>becomes</i> Dancing with tears in my yeyes

Read across from one column to the other. When spoken in most dialects of English, the sounds will be practically identical! Meaning will often be gleaned from context.

mice pies	my spies
grey tapes	great apes
send the maid	send them aid
car pit	carpet
it's an aim	it's a name
grade 'A'	grey day
ice cream	I scream
the way to cut it	the waiter cut it

Linked speech

How it sounds:	How it is written:
Where dja wanna go? Whatcha wanna do? I'm no' too sure. I' leave it ta you. Doncha wanna go to town ta see a show? I don' know now, but I'letcha know. Whatcha recommend? Wheredja like ta dine?	Where do you want to go? What do you want to do? I am not too sure. I will leave it to you. Don't you want to go to town to see a show? I don't know, but I will let you know. What do you recommend? Where do you like to dine?

This isn't laziness – this is simply the way that native speakers of English usually naturally speak. The closer that students can get to this idea of linking words together, the more natural their speech will sound.



The phonemic alphabet

How closely does spelling match pronunciation in English? Have a look at the poem below (att. to George Bernard Shaw):

Hints on Pronunciation for Foreigners

I take it you already know
Of tough and bough and cough and dough?
Others may stumble but not you
On hiccough, thorough, laugh and through.
Well done! And now you wish, perhaps,
To learn of less familiar traps?

Beware of heard, a dreadful word
That looks like beard and sounds like bird,
And dead: it's said like bed, not bead –
For goodness sake don't call it deed!
Watch out for meat and great and threat
(They rhyme with suite and straight and debt)

A moth is not a moth in mother
Nor both in bother, broth in brother,
And here is not a match for there
Nor dear and fear for bear and pear,
Just look them up – and goose and choose,
And cork and work and card and ward,
And font and front and word and sword,
And do and go and thwart and cart –
Come, come, I've hardly made a start!
A dreadful language? Man alive.
I'd mastered it when I was five.

You should have noticed one of the most problematic areas of pronunciation in the English language, spelling of words and their pronunciation often differs. Many words are written with similar individual or groups of letters but are pronounced very differently. How are students to know how to pronounce a new word? A dictionary can be very helpful as it not only states the meaning of a word, gives its class (noun/adjective/verb etc) and sometimes gives example sentences but also it provides the pronunciation. Have a look at a dictionary and you will probably notice that immediately after the traditional spelling of the word it is written again using some rather strange symbols. These are usually the symbols of the international phonemic alphabet. Once the students (and the teacher!) are familiar with this alphabet, they should be able to accurately pronounce any word in the dictionary.

It is perfectly possible to work on the sounds of English without ever using these phonemic symbols but we would perhaps be doing our students a disservice. The students will see them in their dictionaries, in their course books and some of them may even already know this alphabet and expect the teacher to know it too! It will certainly make things easier for the teacher and the students if they can develop a working knowledge of the system.

One of the most important skills, when using the phonemic alphabet, is to forget about the way a word is traditionally spelt and focus only on the sounds you make when saying a particular word. Find the symbol that produces each individual sound and put them together to form the phonetic spelling.

It doesn't matter where you are from, or what variety of English you speak. The phonetic alphabet is simply a set of symbols that represent the way we, as English speakers, put sounds together to form words.

There are many occasions when, for example, a speaker of English from the north of England, will write a word phonetically in a different way to a compatriot from the south of England. They speak slightly differently! Similarly, Australians speak a different style of English to Americans. Does that mean that a different chart for every conceivable variety of English should be produced? Obviously not, as this would go against the universal system of one set of phonetic symbols for ALL speakers of English. This is why the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) was conceived.

The example words in the International Phonemic Alphabet chart (given on the next page) happen to be based on British English, but the individual sounds, represented by the bold text within the words, are universal, and are pronounced identically whatever style of English the speaker uses.

Phonemic Symbols

Consonants (voiced)

1. /n/ **nun** /nʌn/
2. /b/ **big** /bɪg/
3. /m/ **my** /maɪ/
4. /d/ **do** /du:/
5. /j/ **yes** /jes/
6. /g/ **go** /gəʊ/
7. /w/ **well** /wel/
8. /v/ **van** /væn/
9. /ð/ **the** /ðə/
10. /z/ **zoo** /zu:/
11. /l/ **live** /lɪv/
12. /r/ **red** /red/
13. /ʒ/ **treasure** /treʒə/
14. /dʒ/ **jazz** /dʒæz/
15. /ŋ/ **English** /ɪŋlɪʃ/

Consonants (unvoiced)

16. /h/ **hot** /hɒt/
17. /s/ **sun** /sʌn/
18. /f/ **fish** /fɪʃ/
19. /t/ **tea** /ti/
20. /k/ **cat** /kæt/
21. /p/ **pen** /pen/
22. /θ/ **thumb** /θʌm/
23. /ʃ/ **ship** /ʃɪp/
24. /tʃ/ **chest** /tʃest/

Vowels

25. /i:/ **see** /si:/
26. /ɪ/ **sit** /sɪt/
27. /e/ **ten** /ten/
28. /æ/ **apple** /æpəl/
29. /u:/ **blue** /blu:/
30. /ɑ:/ **father** /fɑ:ðə/
31. /ɒ/ **clock** /klɒk/
32. /ɔ:/ **saw** /sɔ:/
33. /ʊ/ **put** /pʊt/
34. /ʌ/ **up** /ʌp/
35. /ɜ:/ **bird** /bɜ:rd/
36. /ə/ **above** /əbʌv/

Diphthongs

37. /eɪ/ **game** /geɪm/
38. /əʊ/ **no** /nəʊ/
39. /aɪ/ **wine** /waɪn/
40. /aʊ/ **how** /haʊ/
41. /ɔɪ/ **toy** /tɔɪ/
42. /ɪə/ **weary** /wɪəri/
43. /eə/ **fairy** /feəri/
44. /ʊə/ **tourist** /tʊərɪst/

Try the phonemic alphabet out for yourself. Say your first name and note which sounds you hear, find the sounds from the phonemic alphabet and this will be the phonemic spelling of the word.

To compare voiced and unvoiced consonants, put your hand gently on your throat and say 'bat', followed by 'pat'. You should feel a vibration in your throat with the /b/ sound and nothing at all for the /p/ sound. This is because /b/ is voiced, i.e. you make a noise when your vocal chords are vibrating, and /p/ is unvoiced – this is purely the movement of air, with no vibration of the vocal chords. Your voice doesn't produce any sound at all here! This is also a useful way of explaining the difference to students – get them to put their hands on their own throats, to 'feel' the difference.

Also compare how your mouth and lips move when you produce the /b/ and /p/ sound. You should find that your mouth does exactly the same for each; it's only your voice that changes. How many other examples can you find in the chart that are similar in this way, i.e. voiced and unvoiced consonants where the mouth position is the same for each? There are a few!

This area is explored in more detail in the following section, "Articulation".



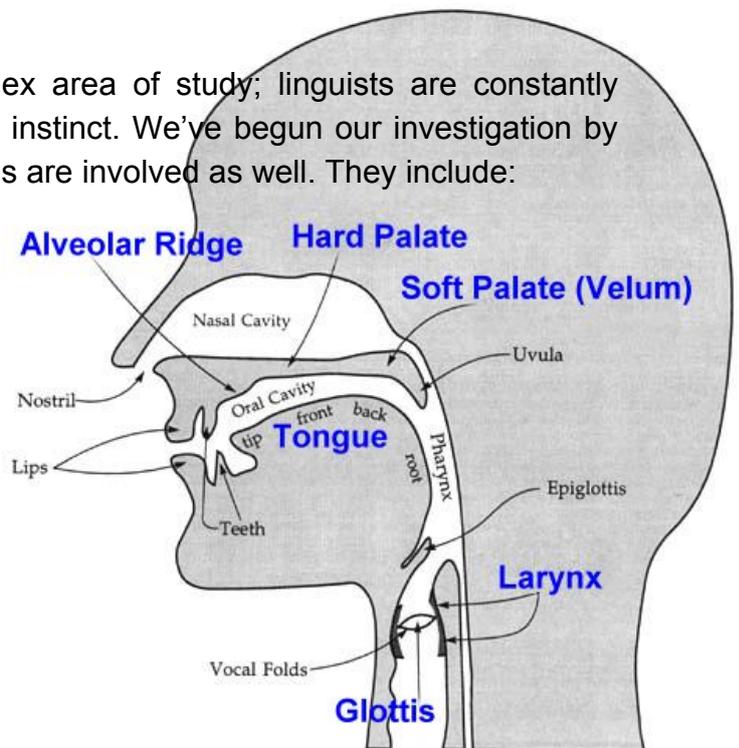
Articulation

The Speech Organs

Human speech is an enormously complex area of study; linguists are constantly learning more about this amazing human instinct. We've begun our investigation by looking at the vocal cords, but other organs are involved as well. They include:

The tongue	The alveolar ridge
The larynx	The hard palate
The glottis	The soft palate

The three items in the right-hand column are not separate speech organs, but rather areas in the mouth.



Place of Articulation

Linguists use this weighty phrase to describe the physical location of a phoneme's production. Each is connected to a different organ or area. Let's explore each turn:

Velar The soft palate is also known as the *velum*. When the back of the tongue is raised and strikes the velum, *velar consonants* are produced.

Say the following sounds: /k/ and /g/. Can you feel where the back of your tongue is before the sound is released? Can you identify one more consonant labeled as velar?

Palatal Here, the central part of your tongue comes in close contact with the central part of the roof of your mouth.

Make the /ʒ/ sound. Can you feel where your tongue is? Can you think of at least one other sound that is made in a similar way?

If you can't, take a deep breath and make the /ʒ/ sound again. Now, add voice. Can you recognize this sound? How about the final sound in "beige" or "massage" or the "s" in "leisure"?

Alveolar The *alveolar ridge* is the bony area just behind the top teeth. In alveolar sounds, the front or tip of the tongue is raised toward the alveolar ridge.

Make the /t/ sound. Where is your tongue? Can you think of any other alveolar consonants? There are nine in total.

Dental When you think of words like “dentist”, you can imagine that dental consonants somehow involve the teeth. In English, there are two dental sounds in which the tongue is placed between the teeth.

Say the word “think”. Where is your tongue at the beginning of the word on the “th” sound? Now, say the word “this”. What is the difference between the dental “th” consonant in “think” and “this”?

If you say the words “think” and “this” very slowly, you should notice that on “think”, the “th” sound is voiceless and with “this” it is voiced. We therefore have two phonemes for the “th” sounds.

Labio-Dental The word “labio” has to do with the lips, and as you know, “dental” has to do with the teeth. In English, there are two consonants that are produced by having the top teeth come in contact with the lower lips. One of them is /f/. The other is /v/.

Bilabial As you can probably guess, “bi” means “two”, so “bilabial” means two lips. Several sounds in English are made by putting the lips together, like the /p/ sound. Three other bilabials are /b/, /m/, and /w/.

Glottal The opening between the vocal cords is called the glottis. In English, there is one sound in which air is restricted at the glottis. Can you identify the sole glottal consonant? There is only one sound that uses the throat only.

Lateral Lateral consonants are pronounced with the air escaping on the side of the tongue rather than on the front. Strictly speaking, the lateral quality is not really a “place of articulation” as such, and can be combined with other properties of the consonants.

Manner of Articulation

As you probably found out in the last section on bilabial sounds, /p/, /b/, and /m/ are all made by putting the lips together. Although /p/ and /b/ are essentially formed in the same way (with /p/ being voiceless and /b/ being voiced), there is a definite difference between /b/ and /m/, for example. This difference is referred to as manner of articulation.

Plosives

- a. Prepare to make the /p/ sound, but do not make the sound. Your mouth should be closed (i.e. your lips should be together).
- b. Now, release the sound.
- c. Do the same for /t/. Simply put your mouth in position to make the /t/ sound. Can you breathe? If you are doing it right, you shouldn't be able to.
- d. Now, release the "t" sound.
- e. Do the same for the following sounds: /b/, /d/, /k/, /g/

What do all these sounds have in common?

These sounds are identified by linguists as plosives. Why? Think of the word "explode". Before you make each of these sounds, the air is completely blocked before being released in an explosive manner.

Fricatives

Do the following:

- a. Take a deep breath.
- b. Make the /f/ sound. Your upper teeth should be touching your lower lip (labio-dental!). Hold the sound ("ffffff").
- c. Do the same for the /v/ sound. Remember, don't say the letter "v", just hold the sound. It should sound like an electric razor.
- d. Do the same for the /ʃ/ sound (the "sh" sound). It should sound like you want someone to be quiet.

e. Now try the /s/ sound. You should sound like a snake.

What do these sounds have in common?

These sounds are known as fricatives. Can you see the connection to the word “friction”?

Can you think of some other sounds that are fricatives? A couple to start with are /f/ and /v/. There are nine altogether, although one is rather tricky!

In all these sounds, an obstruction is made, but the air is still forced through. As air is being pushed through a very small space, turbulence or friction is produced.

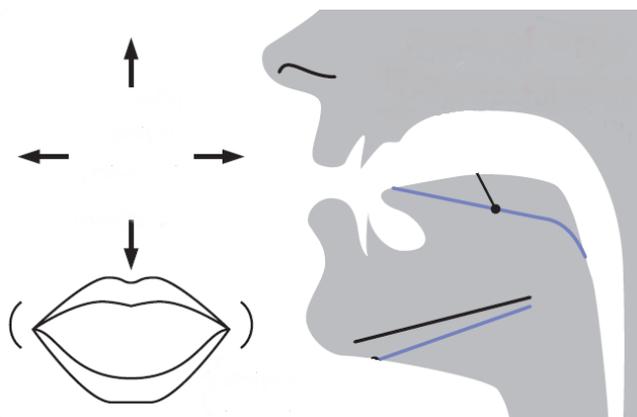
Nasals

All nasal sounds are produced by making an obstacle in the mouth and lowering the soft palate so that air can only escape through the nasal cavity. Three sounds can be identified as nasals: /m/, /n/ and /ŋ/.

Affricates

One sequence commonly found in English is the succession of a plosive by the corresponding fricative. It then often happens that the release of the plosive merges with the attack of the fricative to form an affricate. In other words, an affricate pair is a plosive with constrictive release. Examples of affricates found in English are the /tʃ/ sound in the word “church” and the /dʒ/ sound in “judge” (the voiced counterpart).

The chart on the following page shows both place and manner of articulation for consonants. The most important expressions to know for manner of articulation are: plosives, fricatives, affricates, and nasals.



MANNER AND PLACE OF ARTICULATION							
	bilabial	labio-dental	dental	alveolar	palatal	velar	glottal
plosive	/p/ /b/			/t/ /d/		/k/ /g/	
fricative		/f/ /v/	/θ/ /ð/	/s/ /z/	/ʃ/ /ʒ/		/h/
affricate				/tʃ/ /dʒ/			
nasal	/m/			/n/		/ŋ/	
lateral				/l/			
semi-vowel	/w/					/j/	
continuent				/r/			

To help you understand this chart, /b/ and /p/ are bilabial plosives. /f/ and /v/ are labio-dental fricatives.

Can you identify the two velar plosives in English?

How would you describe the /s/ and /z/ sounds?

Teaching techniques for the pronunciation of individual sounds

The teaching of individual sounds can be good fun for the teacher and the students. Here are some activities that work well:

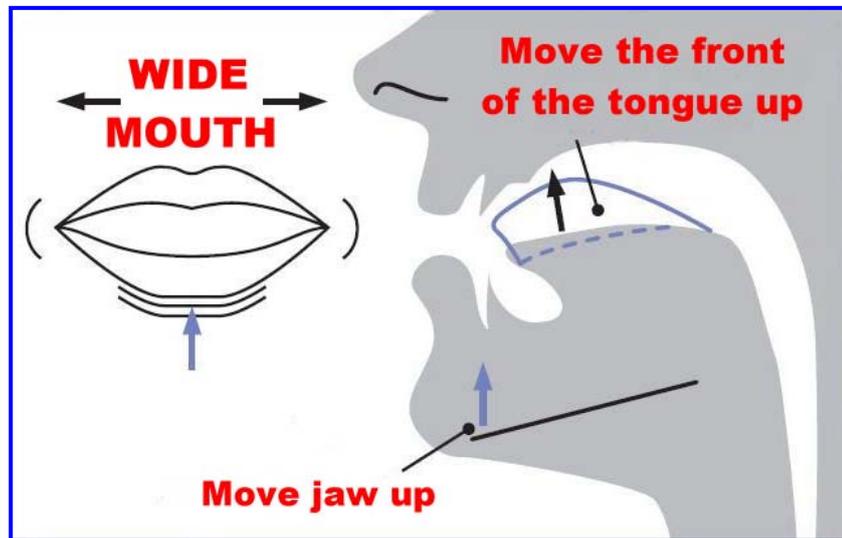
Peer dictation: Students reading and speaking words or sentences for a partner to write down is very useful, and is an effective way for students to analyze pronunciation problems for themselves. Of course the partner shouldn't be able to see the original text!



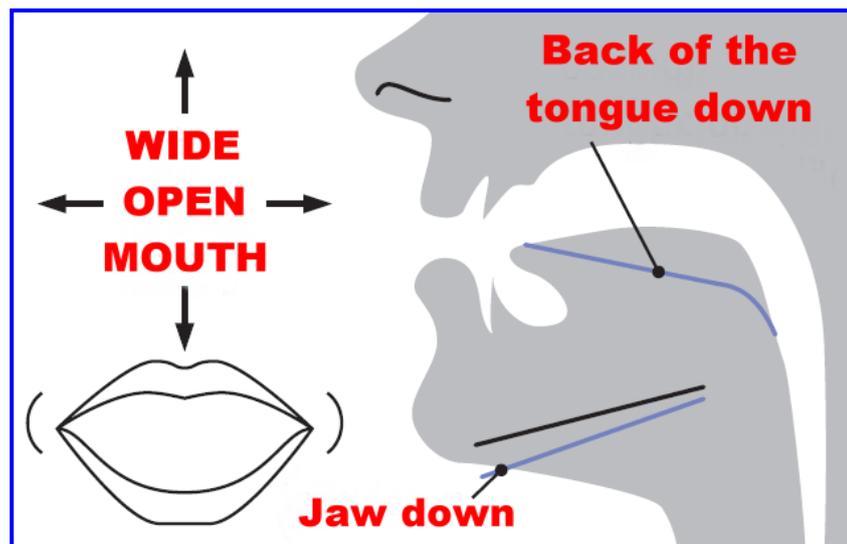
Your own mouth: Over-emphasising individual parts of a word can be beneficial, allowing the students to see as closely as possible exactly what your mouth is doing. As with contrastive stress, you need to finish by pronouncing the word normally, so that students don't come away with a false idea of what is correct!

Visuals: By drawing a diagram of the mouth showing how a particular sound is made. Here are a couple of examples:

The first is for /eɪ/:



And for /æ/:



Phonemes: Symbols for common or difficult sounds can be introduced to help the class note down problem areas more easily.

Tongue twisters: Need we say more?

When to teach pronunciation

Just as with other areas of the language, teachers must decide when to include pronunciation work into their lessons. Different teachers have different ideas on the subject but the following are the most common:

Whole lesson – some teachers like to devote whole lessons to pronunciation, working on a variety of issues relevant to their students' needs.

Lesson slots – some teachers prefer to slot a certain amount of particular pronunciation work into each lesson.

As and when required – other teachers deal with pronunciation issues as they come up in the classroom.

There is no right or wrong way. Each teacher has to decide what is best for their particular circumstances.

Some recommended materials for practice in English pronunciation, stress and intonation patterns are:

Elements of Pronunciation by Colin Mortimer, (Cambridge University Press) which comes with a student book and cassette. This book consists of practice materials for “stress time”, “weak forms”, “liaison” (linkages between words) and “consonant clusters”.

Another great resource is the *Headway* pronunciation series, by Sarah Cunningham, Bill Bowler and Sue Parminter (Oxford University Press). It was originally designed to complement the *Headway* general coursebooks, but each level of the pronunciation series can also be used in isolation.

It should be remembered that we are unlikely to ever get 100% perfection in our students' pronunciation. In all likelihood they will never speak English with the same pronunciation as a native speaker, and for many students that is not even their goal.

At the end of the day, we must be realistic in our teaching and sometimes be prepared to accept intelligibility instead of perfection.

You'll need this for task 9 on the worksheet:

trænzleɪt ðɪsɪntə nɔ:məl skɪpt

gæri: wɒtsðə mætə pi:t

pi:t maɪd:m hɜ:ts rɪəlɪ bæd

gæri: waɪ wɒtəvju:bɪn du:ɪŋ

pi:t aɪnbɪn pleɪɪŋ tu: mʌtʃ ɡɒlf

gæri: hævjə si:nə dɒktərəbaʊtɪt

pi:t nəʊwaɪ hævnt hæd taɪm jet djəθɪŋkaɪ ʃʊd

gæri: aɪwʊdɪfaɪ wɜ: ju: bɪfɔ:rɪt drɒpsɒf

pi:t θæŋks fɔ: jɔ:rədvaɪs

gæri: nəʊ prɒbləm meɪt enɪ taɪm

pi:t kætʃjə leɪtə

gæri: si:jə